

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 MED-02 HEW-02 OES-03 SCA-01 EUR-12 DRC-01

(ISO) W

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R 091041Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4016

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, MILL, PFOR, CB, TH

SUBJECT: LATEST ARRIVAL PROVIDES MORE ON PHNOM PENH'S FALL

REF: A. BANGKOK 8020 EXDIS; B. BANGKOK 8013 EXDIS

BEGIN SUMMARY: ONE OF THE FOUR AMERICANS TO COME OUT OF PHNOM PENH ON THE MAY 7 CONVOY HAS PROVIDED ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON THE FALL OF THE CITY; THE STATUS OF SENIOR KHMER REPUBLICAN OFFICIALS IN COMMUNIST HANDS; THE EVACUATION OF ALL OF PHNOM PENH; AND AN OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA. END SUMMARY.

1. FREE-LANCE AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER ALAN ROCKOFF, WHO REACHED THAILAND MAY 7 WITH THE LATTER CONVOY FROM PHNOM PENH, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE UNDERSTOOD AT LEAST THREE KC FACTIONS ENTERED THE CITY ON OR JUST AFTER ITS FALL. BEFORE TAKING REFUGE IN THE FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND, ROCKOFF TRAVELED AROUND TOWN WITH A GROUP OF KC WHO CAME FROM THE NORTH AND CALLED THEMSELVES "KHMER RUMDOH." HIS HOSTS RAN INTO A TOUGH-TALKING BAND OF KC WHO ENTERED PHNOM PENH FROM THE SOUTH. THESE FORCES DID NOT LABEL THEMSELVES. ROCKOFF BELIEVED THAT YET A THIRD KC FACTION HAD ALSO ENTERED THE CAPITAL. KC OFFICERS

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WORE A BLACK RIBBON AROUND THEIR WRISTS AS A BADGE OF RANK

DURING THE MORNING OF APRIL 17. THE RIBBON HAD GONE BY THE AFTERNOON AND THEREAFTER THE ONLY SIGN OF KC RANK WAS A BALLPOINT PEN AND A POCKET-SIZE NOTEBOOK. ENTERING KC TROOPS FLEW A BLUE AND RED FLAG MARKED DIAGONALLY WITH A CROSS. THAT FLAG, TOO, HAD DISAPPEARED BY THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 17.

2. ROCKOFF SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE ANY EXECUTIONS AND NO ONE REPORTED ANY TO HIM. HE PHOTOGRAPHED THE OLD AND NEW GOVERNMENTS WHOM THE KC HAD LINED UP AT THE INFORMATION MINISTRY. PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET LOOKED CALM; RELATIONS BETWEEN BORET AND THE KC APPEARED CORDIAL. ROCKOFF RECOGNIZED BUT COULD NOT NAME OTHER MEMBERS OF LONG BORET'S CABINET. HE DID SEE FANK BRIGADIER GENERAL HIN NIM AT THE INFORMATION MINISTRY.

3. THE KC ARRESTED ROCKOFF, NY TIMES CORRESPONDENT SYDNEY SCHANBERG, AND A BRITISH CORRESPONDENT WHEN THE KC TOOK OVER THE PREAH KET MALEA HOSPITAL. THEY LOCKED THE JOURNALISTS IN AN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER AND DROVE THEM TO THE BANKS OF THE TONLE SAP JUST SOUTH OF THE JAPANESE BRIDGE. ALL THREE THOUGHT THEY WERE TO BE EXECUTED. A NYT KHMER EMPLOYEE, HOWEVER, HAD FOLLOWED THE APC FROM THE HOSPITAL AND TALKED THE GUARDS INTO RELEASING THE WESTERNERS. THE KC KEPT TWO FANK OFFICERS IN MUFTI WHOM THEY HAD SCOOPED UP AS THE APC DROVE TO THE RIVER. ONE OF THE GKR PRISONERS SAID HE WAS THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE KHMER NAVY.

4. ROCKOFF SAID THAT HE HEARD OF DEATHS AMONG THE PEOPLE MARCHED OUT OF PHNOM PENH BUT ATTRIBUTED THESE CASUALTIES TO EXHAUSTION, OLD AGE, INFIRMITY OR DISEASE. HE SAID THAT AT LEAST 80 PEOPLE HAD CONTRACTED CHOLERA. KC DOCTORS AND SOME OF THE ORIGINAL KHMER MEDICAL STAFF AT CALMETTE HOSPITAL WERE CARING FOR THESE PATIENTS. ROCKOFF NOTED THAT THE NUMBER OF SICK WAS A VERY CONSERVATIVE FIGURE WHICH KC GUARDS AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY GAVE HIM. THE GUARDS ADDED THAT MANY OF THE RESIDENTS OF PHNOM PENH WHOM THE KC SENT FROM THE CITY TO PLANT RICE HAD ALSO CONTRACTED CHOLERA.

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5. PLEASE DOWNGRADE REFTELS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE AND REMOVE THE EXDIS CAPTION EFFECTIVE MAY 9, 1975.
MASTERS

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